consist of natural objects such as rivers, big trees, etc. To define the boundaries of their gardens, Natives dig an ordinary ditch (ndjilekana, mu-mi) round the field, of about one foot in depth, which can be plainly traced even after the lapse of several years, when the field may have become fallow land and overgrown with vegetation. 423 618

The question of *roads* is a somewhat difficult, and often thorny one to settle. Where has one the right to go ? And if, after having used a certain path for years, you suddenly find it blocked by some individual whose field it skirts, and who has taken a fancy to hoe it up, what is to be done ? To try to come to some friendly agreement is always the most practical course. How often have we not experienced this difficulty with our cart ! The agriculturists were the more annoyed because we required a road three or four yards wide, while the Native footpaths are only little tracks of 15 to 20 inches in width. Being the only "carriage folk" in the district, we often had to ask permission to be allowed to pass, and have rarely met with any kind of refusal, for the Black is a reasonable being and quite appreciates the fact that roads are a necessity. If they see that a road is "ripening" (wupfile), viz., that it is more and more frequently used, they bow before the facts ; here, as everywhere else, custom makes the law. 423 487

At the present moment matters have been made much more simple as the Portuguese Government has constructed wide highways in all the more frequented parts of the country. 177 491

B. PRODUCTS OF THE SOIL.

I. *Cereals.*

"Hosi ya psone i *psithjama*" — "Their king is the *maize*," says Mboza. This cereal is indeed the most widely cultivated in Thongaland. It is called *psifake* in Djonga. In the more fertile regions of the North, the size of the cobs and of the grains (nhleke, yin-tin) is much larger than on the sandy dunes of the Ba-Ronga. So the people of Khosen make fun of the Ba-Ronga and compare 243

243 their mealies with the small pimples of their tattooing (tinhleke ta Ba-Ronga). If maize is the most appreciated cereal, it is certainly not the most ancient known to the tribe. Owing to its modernity, no doubt, it is not subject to any taboo. It is sown and harvested [252] without any rite. At Christmas time, when the first cobs are edible, people joyfully feast on the new crop. They cook some of them in the ashes, but they allow the rest to ripen and dry upon [626] the stalks. Although no taboo prevents any owner of a field from eating the first mealies whenever it suits him, Mboza asserts that people who have obtained green mealies before the other inhabitants of the village, do not precede them in the enjoyment of this much appreciated food : "It would cause jealousy amongst them." This reason is perhaps at the bottom of the luma taboo (I, p. 394). Moreover they fear lest they might have to share their good luck with all their friends !

243 Next in importance comes the *mabele*, plur. of bele, dji-ma
273 (Ro.), ñwahuba (Dj.), the *millet* or *Kafir corn*. This is the well-known millet which we give to birds in cages, small, round, blackish grains which grow on a stem 3 to 5 feet high, in elongated cylindrical ears. Kafir corn is pounded, or ground, and may be eaten in the form of flour. But its main use is to provide the
243 yeast for the Kafir beer. As already pointed out (I. p. 42) the
825 mabele is one of the oldest cereals known to the Thongas. It is the ritual cereal, that used for the "shimhimbi," the dish offered to the confined mother or prepared for the luma ceremony. Its seeds undergo a certain treatment before being sown : the sub-chief blows upon them after having taken a small piece of a certain root in his mouth ; this root obtained from a kind of juncus found in the mountains, is supposed to have the power of keeping the ants away from the seeds. He distributes the seeds thus treated amongst his people, and every one mixes some of them with his own supply. Men of the reigning family alone possess
243 this root. Later on, when the time for sowing has come, it is
787 taboo for subjects to precede their chiefs or sub-chiefs in sowing mabele. The bones are consulted. Should the "madjuma" fall showing their mouths (see Part VI), it is the answer of the gods. They say: "Yes! this is the proper time! The mabele will do well!"

The horoscope is all the more satisfactory if the astragalus of the sheep is in the positive position, showing that the chiefs are happy and prosperous. At harvest time, Kafir corn is subject to the luma taboo, as explained in detail in a preceding chapter. All these rites prove the antiquity of the cereal. 243 787

The *sorghum*, (*maphila*, plur. of phila, dji-ma), is also extensively cultivated all through Thongaland. There are many kinds of sorghum : the *phila* proper, with reddish and white grains, the *timba*, whose stem has a sweet taste and is enjoyed almost as much as sugar cane, the *shikombe*, whose ears are curved, the *ntjyaka*, with a particularly elongated ear and the *djabana* with white seeds. The last has a somewhat bitter taste and is consequently spared by the birds, which are so fond of the other kinds of cereals that people have to stay in their gardens for months together to scare them away. 243

Rice (*mpunga*, mu-mi) is met with in a few districts only, notably on the Lower Nkomati, where the tide provides a natural irrigation, and in some depressions of the coast belt, especially near Rikatla. I could not say when it was introduced amongst the Thongas. In Shiluvane, its cultivation was entirely unknown in 1890, when it was brought thither by Lourenço Marques Natives. However a storekeeper told me that rice had been extensively cultivated in the country between 1870 and 1880. As it is subject to certain taboos (see later on) it may be that it is older than one would at first suspect.

In some places another cereal is cultivated, the *likoro* (probably Eleusine indica).

II. *Vegetables.*

Three Leguminosae play a considerable part in the feeding of the tribe : the ground nut, Kafir pea and Kafir bean. 244

a) The ground-nut, (Arachis hypogea), (rumane plur. marumane or tinumane (1) (Ro.), timanga (Dj.), is extensively cultivated,

(1) Rumane (cl. dji-ma) can form its plural either by prefixing *ma* which is the regular way, or by prefixing *tin*, which is exceptional. In the second case, the *n* of the prefix causes the initial *r* to permute into *n*.

these several loads!) It is made in much the same way as the roof of a hut, point downwards, ribs of folioles taking the place of sticks. This basket may be said to be the special property of the women (1) : they are very clever at balancing it on their heads ; it is very rarely that a woman, old or young, lets her shihundju fall. When empty it is turned upside down and serves as a hat. It is a really pretty sight to see the young girls starting out for the fields with their conical baskets standing straight up on their fuzzy locks. When they are travelling and arrive at a friendly village, they hold themselves perfectly upright, shooting glances here and there without stooping or turning their heads, till their friends rush out to meet them, seize their shihundju and place them on the ground, in small holes which they hastily make in the sand. This is the first duty of hospitality amongst women!

285 482 574

The *lihlelo* (No. 8) is used by cooks for winnowing the maize. Palm leaves not being sufficiently strong for this purpose, the lihlelo is made of the roots, of a tree called *nukanhlelo* (a kind of mimosa), cut into strips, and is coated with a reddish brown varnish prepared from mangrove bark. It is the lihlelo, or rather a smaller basket of the same sort called *ndjewane*, that the housewife takes with her when picking the small wild cucumbers, or gathering the various herbs which serve for the supplementary noontide luncheon.

285 415 243

In the northern clans one often meets with a spherical basket made of the same material as the winnowing basket and covered with an ordinary lihlelo.

285

Besides the foregoing, the Ba-Ronga have two or three baskets which are not in such general use : the *nhlaba*, a kind of plaited bag with interstices between the palm straws, for carrying fish, the *ntjaba*, etc.

Another article, which might, at first sight, be taken for a basket, but which serves quite a different purpose, is the *nhluto*, the strainer. (No. 1.) This unusually shaped strainer is a sort of long bag of plaited straw into which is poured the beer made

285 415 273

(1) The male members of the family are called "ba matlhari, those of the assagai" and the female "ba-shihundju, those of the basket," as these objects are characteristic of each sex.

1 [See p. 124 -- Analyst]